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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000442

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [IZ](#) [QA](#) [BA](#)  
SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VERSHBOW AND  
AMBASSADOR ERELI MEET WITH KING HAMAD OF BAHRAIN

Classified By: Ambassador Adam Ereli for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a July 22 meeting with Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, and the U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, Adam Ereli, King Hamad of Bahrain was unwavering in his support for United States policies in the Gulf, welcomed any new requests the U.S. may need from Bahrain, voiced strong support for U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and said he was ready to play a positive role toward Israel. However, he voiced strong "annoyance" at Qatari behavior, particularly the recent visit of Qatar's Chief of Staff of its Armed Forces to Iran, as well as Qatari rebuffs to Bahraini requests for natural gas. END SUMMARY

12. (C) King Hamad warmly welcomed Ambassadors Vershbow and Ereli and began the meeting by thanking the United States for the staunch support we provide Bahrain. He reminded the Ambassadors that Bahrain is a long-time U.S. ally, remains firm in its support of U.S. efforts in the Gulf, and greatly values our bilateral relationship that is of significant importance to Bahrain's interests. He said Bahrain will do anything to work together with the U.S. He was particularly praiseworthy of the bilateral defense relationship, commenting that the superb advice Bahrain's Defense Forces (BDF) receive from the U.S. has resulted in the BDF being one of the cleanest organizations in Bahrain's government. The King also noted that the equipment received through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) process was of high quality and operationally effective, and he was also proud of the strong relations established with U.S. 5th Fleet.

13. (C) Ambassador Vershbow thanked His Majesty for hosting the Military Consultative Committee that was currently meeting in Manama and for his country's support to U.S. interests. He noted that the U.S.-Bahraini relationship was very strong and mutually beneficial and affirmed to the King that the U.S. and Bahrain shared a similar vision in the region despite its many challenges.

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Afghanistan and Iraq  
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14. (C) Turning to Afghanistan and Iraq, King Hamad said the upcoming deployment of Bahrain's Ministry of Interior (MoI) security unit to provide fixed site security in Afghanistan would provide great experience to MoI personnel and allows Bahrain to show its flag and demonstrate support for the Coalition. He stated that U.S. involvement in Afghanistan provided a golden opportunity for the Afghan people to build their country's security forces as well as their education, medical, science and trade programs and ministries. The King added that U.S. efforts should be touted more in the media. He quoted President Eisenhower, saying the "U.S. is soldiering for peace and not waging war" and he understood

that the U.S. was not seeking to rule over Afghanistan or Iraq. He is convinced that the U.S. is in both places to help the Afghan and Iraqi people and he was appreciative of our armed forces personnel performing their duties in places so far from home. King Hamad noted some instability in Iraq, but thought overall, Iraq was on a positive slope. ASD Vershbow thanked the King for his comments and said it was important that the world hears his, as well as similar explanations, of U.S. policies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

¶5. (C) Commenting on Bahrain's participation in coalition maritime operations and efforts against terrorism and piracy, King Hamad said he had recently told his Parliament that, "Ships are sailing to defend the region and why don't we join them? If we don't join, we will miss an opportunity." His remarks acknowledged Bahrain's past and current participation in Combined Task Force (CTF) 152 and its anticipated participation in CTF 151.

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Annoyed and Concerned about Qatar  
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¶6. (C) The King voiced concern about what is happening in the region and stated that he would like to see a stronger Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a deterrent against future threats and to provide more security in the region. King Hamad flatly stated that Bahrain is not happy with Qatar. He took particular exception to the recent visit to Iran by Qatar's Chief of Staff, MG Hamad al Attiyah. He noted that during the visit, the two sides released a statement agreeing to joint training exercises, intelligence exchange and

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reciprocal visits of military staff and units. "This is going too far," King Hamad fumed. It's one thing to have trade and commercial exchanges, he noted, but to welcome Iranian military units on the territory of a GCC member state is "a strategic matter." He went on to say that Iran is the number-one threat in the region; any country should be cautious about exchanging military information with Iran, and no GCC country should allow an Iranian military unit or personnel to land on its shores. The King stated that he would like to show Qatar some type of unhappiness for its actions with Iran.

¶7. (C) The King said it is rumored that MG al-Attiyah may retire as the Qatari CHOD and perhaps this influenced his decision to visit Iran. (NOTE: In a separate meeting with ASD Vershbow and State P/M Assistant Secretary Shapiro, during their July 20-21 visit to Doha, MG al-Attiyah did state that his visit to Iran was long planned but perhaps ill-timed to coincide with recent post-election activities in Tehran; since it was previously planned, he had not wanted to cancel his visit. END NOTE.) King Hamad added that Qatar's behavior "is an annoyance, but it was too early to be angry at them." King Hamad went on saying he "would like our brother in Saudi Arabia to send a note telling Qatar not to play like this."

¶8. (C) ASD Vershbow affirmed U.S. displeasure with Iranian behavior, particularly its nuclear program, and stated the U.S. would not tolerate Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons. He told the King we were disappointed with the timing of the Qatari CHOD's visit, but hoped the Qataris could persuade Iran to engage with the U.S. to end its nuclear program, rather than seeking a confrontation with the international community.

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Plug for the Crown Prince  
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¶9. (C) ASD Vershbow said he appreciated the Crown Prince's recent op-ed published on the Middle East which he understood bore the King's stamp. He said the Crown Prince's points

about Arab countries seizing the opportunity at hand and setting aside past differences to move forward on the peace process was right on mark. King Hamad responded that Bahrain supported U.S.-led efforts to make peace and agreed that the Arab world needed to contribute positively to this effort. Returning to Qatar, King Hamad noted that Abdul Bari al Atwan, the editor-in-chief of the pan-Arab daily "Al Quds al Arabi," had written a widely-read article critical of the Crown Prince's op-ed. Qatar is a major financial backer of al Quds al Arabi, the King remarked, and he clearly saw the hand of Doha behind Abdul Bari's attack. Continuing on this theme, King Hamad said there were two major issues that made him angry with regard to Qatar. The first was the Iran issue; the second was gas. For years, Bahrain has been asking to buy Qatari gas, but their response has always been that Qatar exports were maxed out and it was not prepared to enter into new supply contracts. These rejections notwithstanding, the King asserted that he had recently learned that Qatar has inked a new supply deal with Mexico and will increase gas supplies to England. He was at a loss to understand Qatari behavior.

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On Israel  
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¶10. (C) Commenting on Bahraini initiatives with Israel, King Hamad said Bahrain continues to do its best to make Bahrain's position clear to Israel and the world, and expressed thanks for President Obama's recent detailed letter. He was taking his time in drafting a similarly detailed response, and would share his response with Ambassador Ereli when it was ready. King Hamad said he looks forward to cooperating more with the U.S. on key regional issues and specifically referenced the soon to be executed moves of P-3 aircraft to Isa Air Base and DoD's location of its forward Near East South Asia (NESA) Center to Manama. ASD Vershbow and AMB Ereli thanked the King for his strong support for U.S. policies and encouraged Bahrain to continue its constructive behavior and leadership in the Gulf.

¶11. (U) ASD Vershbow has cleared this message.  
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